



How to support children with Developmental Coordination Disorder

Fine Motor Skills

My child has problem in fine motor function. How can I help him/ her to improve?

Children with Developmental Coordination Disorder commonly present with weak upper-limb control, deficit in eye-hand and bilateral coordination, finger dexterity, muscle strength, graded force control, and lack of fluidity in movements. Motor difficulties vary among individuals. In order to make training effective, parents should understand children's area of deficit and focus on them specifically.

Parents can enhance their children's fine motor skills through daily activities. The followings are some suggested activities:

- **Improving eye-hand/ bilateral coordination:** Line tracing, paper cutting, folding tasks (e.g. paper, towels, clothes)
- **Strengthening upper-limb muscles:** Wringing towels, pushing shopping trolleys, cracking nuts (e.g. peanuts, walnuts).
- **Improving finger dexterity:** Manipulating clay, building small models, winding rubber bands.



My child cannot hold the pencil properly. How can I correct him/ her?

Fine motor problems especially weak finger dexterity and hand strength can affect children's ability to hold the pencils properly. Foundation training on fine motor skills is necessary. Besides, use of writing aids such as enlarged pencil gripper or thicker pencil may help the child to achieve a more functional tripod grip. (i.e. holding the pencil with the first three fingers, namely the thumb, index and middle fingers, while positioning the pencil shaft on the web space as the photo below). Parents may consult occupational therapist for any query.



My child writes very slowly and untidily. Is it related to problem in fine motor coordination? How can I help him/ her to improve?

There are several factors that affect handwriting performance. It may be related to weak fine motor coordination, visual perceptual deficit, inattention or dyslexia. Therefore, parents have to understand their children's underlying causes in order to help them specifically. For those problems that related to deficit in fine motor coordination, parents should focus on specific fine motor skills training. To improve the legibility of Chinese handwriting, use of visual cues, by drawing a dotted cross to divide the writing grids into four equal quadrants, improves spatial arrangement and proportion of the radicals. For English writing, adding a line above the writing line helps in guiding the size and space of the letters for child.



My child appears to be “clumsy” in daily activities and is messy in performing self-care tasks. How can I help him/ her to do better?

Children with developmental coordination disorder will usually lag behind in their functions on daily activities when comparing with peers of similar age. They appear to be messy, untidy and tend to rely on others’ assistance. In order to promote independence in daily living, parents should work on enhancing children’s competence in self-care activities with a positive and encouraging attitude, so as to maximize their participation in the daily routines (e.g. getting dressed, tidying up and packing schoolbags, making sandwiches, etc.).

To deal with the problems in fine motor functions and organization difficulties, the followings are the tips for parents when providing training:

- Encourage children to verbalize the sequences and steps of the task
- Break down the task into smaller steps, and teach them one step at a time
- Provide clear demonstration of each step patiently
- Emphasize on the proper posture and movement pattern while performing the tasks
- Give clear verbal prompt and demonstration in person
- Use colour codes and/ or labels to help children in organizing and keeping personal belongings such as files, drawers, and shelves
- Establish good habit, encourage persistent and frequent practices



Child Assessment Service, Department of Health
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government

Copyright © July, 2021

